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Legal Sanctions and the Consensus of Crime Seriousness

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Legal Sanctions and the Consensus of Crime Seriousness

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
William Dalton Cole
March, 1987
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

William Dalton Cole

Approved, March, 1987

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The research described in this thesis is a replication and extension of the work of Sellin and Wolfgang (1978/1964) and Rossi et al. (1974) in the area of crime seriousness. Sellin and Wolfgang constructed an index of the scores of relative crime seriousness from a sample of police officers and students attending the University of Pennsylvania. Rossi et al. extended the criminal event listings of Sellin and Wolfgang to make it more comprehensive and used a block quota sampling plan from residents of Baltimore, MD.

This project used the criminal event list of Rossi et al. in an attempt to test and extend the consensus found by Sellin and Wolfgang, Rossi et al., and many other authors within the scope of the Williamsburg, VA. area. Despite slight methodological differences (e.g. a mail questionnaire rather than interview format), the results of this study correlate highly with the results of Rossi ($r = .905$) and thus is supportive of the original work of Sellin and Wolfgang. Despite an eleven year time difference between the two studies, there was little variation found in the average score for crime seriousness ($Rossi = 6.2682 \text{ Cole} = 6.4404$).

The clear difference between this study and previous research is that the seriousness scores were then used to discover the extent of correlation between local public opinion and legislatively required sanctions (as recorded in the Virginia Code of Laws). No previous literature was located which attempted to make this determination, thus leading to the original contribution of this work. The correlation between the seriousness scale and the sanction severity scale suggests the existence of a relatively strong positive relationship ($r = .70; \tau c = .60$)
LEGAL SANCTIONS AND THE CONSENSUS OF CRIME SERIOUSNESS
Introduction

To be of theoretical and practical use, a measure of crime 'seriousness' requires that a society show consensus about the order of seriousness of specific criminal acts. This consensus should be reflected in the criminal code, the behavior of judges and juries, and the actions of law enforcement agencies.

--Peter Rossi et al., 1974, p. 224

This quotation by Rossi et al. comes in the introduction of an article describing the replication of the pioneering work of Thorsten Sellin and Marvin E. Wolfgang on crime seriousness. The Rossi replication of Sellin and Wolfgang raises two important questions: 1) Is there a consensus about the seriousness of different crimes; and 2) Is consensus of crime seriousness reflected by "the criminal code, the actions of judges and juries, and the actions of law enforcement agencies"? It is the purpose of this research to provide at least partial answers to these questions.

Sellin and Wolfgang's work was published in 1964.
Entitled The Measurement of Delinquency, the book was reprinted in 1968 and 1978. The work has stood the tests of both time and replication. Over the twenty-one years since it was first published, the Sellin and Wolfgang Magnitude Index has been replicated a number of times (discussed further below) with findings that are highly consistent with the original study.

I propose to replicate Sellin and Wolfgang's work and extend it to see how well community consensus is reflected in the law. The proposed research, limited by logistical considerations, will focus on a local community and community-relevant laws (e.g., state statutes).
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Sellin and Wolfgang (1978) used what appears to be a complex methodology in an attempt to determine perceptions of crime. Their respondents came from three groups: line officers of the Juvenile Aid Division of the Philadelphia Police Department, juvenile court judges, and students attending the University of Pennsylvania. The correlations among the scale values of criminal events as scored by these three groups were amazingly high. The authors present primarily the data from the student sample supplemented occasionally by the data from the police sample.

Sellin and Wolfgang used two separate strategies to create their seriousness index: ratio and category scaling. The ratio scale was constructed using data describing respondents' numerical evaluation of the seriousness of 141 criminal events. One offense was
given an arbitrary score of ten. This was the "control" offense. The respondent was then asked to assign numbers reflecting his perception of the seriousness of the criminal event as it related to the control event. If they thought that a particular event was twice as serious, they were to assign the score of twenty. If it was half as serious, the score should be five. There was no upper limit to the scores; however, respondents were instructed to use only nonzero positive numbers in their descriptions.

The second strategy resulted in a category scale. The respondents were shown cards corresponding to each of the criminal events. They were then asked to place the cards in one of eleven slots corresponding to the seriousness of the offense, with one being least serious and eleven being most serious. It was later discovered that eleven categories were problematic due to the lack of clear definitional lines between categories; for this reason the researchers reduced the number of categories to nine (Sellin and Wolfgang, 1978: chapters 15-16).

Sellin and Wolfgang used the geometric means of both the ratio and category scales in their analysis of the data. The score for the ratio scale was simply the mean of the numbers assigned by the respondents. The score for the category scale was the mean of the
numbers of the categories each offense was placed into (e.g., if the same offense is placed in category nine as often as in category eight, the score is 8.5). The events were then ranked and reported from most to least serious.

Rossi et al. attempted a replication of the Sellin and Wolfgang study. Using a block quota sample of Baltimore residents, Rossi and his colleagues identified 125 whites and 75 blacks (with equal number of men and women overall). The measurement strategy called for the use of the category scaling system. Respondents were asked to sort cards into nine categories with one (1) as the least serious category. Using a listing of 140 criminal events (created by expanding the crimes found in the Uniform Crime Report, adding white collar crime, and adding crimes that are decriminalized in some states), Rossi et al. found a very high correlation among the scores from their study and those from Sellin and Wolfgang's study (1974: 226). An important difference between the studies is that Rossi et al. used a sample of the general population. In addition, Rossi and his colleagues considered variations in ranking across several variables: gender (male or female), race (white or black), and education (high school and above or less than high school). They
array data in a two-by-four matrix: black males, white males, black females, and white females, with each scored by high or low education. The subgroup with scores least correlated with those from the study as a whole was black males with less than a high school education (0.77). The subgroup with the highest correlation was white females with a high school or beyond education (0.94). The overall correlation between males' scores and females' scores was 0.94, whereas the correlation between the scores of whites and blacks was 0.89. On the basis of these results, Rossi et al. offer two conclusions: (1) that the sample used in their study is representative of and corresponds to that used by Sellin and Wolfgang; and (2) that education is at least partly responsible for the determination of the apparent consensus on crime seriousness (1974: 227-231).

McCleary et al. attempted to test the second of Rossi's conclusions. Using the strategies and criminal events of the Rossi study, McCleary et al. asked a sample of criminal justice bureaucrats in a large mid-western city to score events. The results of this study support both the Sellin and Wolfgang index and the Rossi et al. study. McCleary et al. found a high level of agreement among the members of their sample. Their findings were consistent with those of previous
scholars (Normandeau, 1966; Akman, Normandeau, and Turner, 1967; Rossi et al., 1974; Sellin and Wolfgang, 1978). The ordering of the criminal events in this work differed from that of the Rossi et al. sample on only twenty-six crimes (out of 140). In general, the McCleary sample rated crimes slightly less seriously than did the Rossi sample (the mean score for the events in McCleary's work is 5.49; the mean from the Rossi et al. study was 6.35). There were other patterns of disagreement. The criminal justice workers saw victimless crimes as far less serious than did the "citizen" sample in the Rossi et al. study. While the respondents in Rossi's sample tended to differentiate between offenses committed against strangers, acquaintances, and spouses, those in criminal justice in the McCleary et al. sample made no such distinction. Possibly the most interesting difference between these two samples is in the area of white collar crimes. The bureaucrats saw public bribery (both the attempting and accepting of bribes) as far more serious than did the representative sample (McCleary et al., 1981: 278-279).

McCleary was primarily interested in the effects of education on the evaluation of crime seriousness. The hypothesis was that people with the same educational background would feel very similarly on the
relative seriousness of crimes. The data of McCleary et al. do not fully support the hypothesis. Neither do they disprove it. McCleary points out that there was slightly less consensus among the criminal justice employees than among the Rossi et al. representative sample (McCleary et al., 1978: 284).

Both Rossi and McCleary used sets of dummy variables to explain the factors respondents considered when assigning seriousness scores. Rossi (working independently of the other researchers) developed a list of eleven dummy variables which accounted for 68% of the variation in the analysis of crime seriousness (1974: 231-232). These variables were scored as binary variables (presence or absence). The eleven variables constituted a classification system:

1) Crimes Against the Person I: Murder, manslaughter.
2) Crimes Against the Person II: Assault, rape, and incest.
3) Crimes Against the Person III: All other crimes involving actual or threatened personal injury exclusive of those shown above.
4) Crimes Involving Property I: Cases in which the value of goods involved was more than $25.
5) Crimes Involving Property II: All other crimes involving property.
6) Selling Illegal Drugs: Heroin, LSD, Marijuana, Pep pills.
7) "White Collar" Crimes: Embezzlement, income tax cheating, fraudulent business practices, etc.
8) "Victimless" Crimes: Prostitution, homosexuality, etc.
9) Subversion (Crimes Against the State): Deser-
tion, spying for enemy, etc.

10) Crimes Involving Action Against Policemen.
11) Crimes Involving Offenses Against Order:
    Loitering, disturbing the peace, etc.

The McCleary et al. study indicates that respondents
were somewhat influenced by these same characteristics,
but McCleary developed twelve additional variables
(1981: 283):

12) Crimes against judicial order: e.g., perjury,
    leaving the scene of an accident.
13) Crimes where victim and offender are related.
14) Crimes where victim and offender are acquaintances.
15) Premeditated or calculated crimes.
16) Impulsive crimes; absence of premeditation.
17) Negligent crimes; absence of intent.
18) Sex-related crimes; e.g., prostitution, incest.
19) Crimes where the victim is a minor.
20) Crimes involving the use of a weapon.
21) Crimes committed in the dwelling place of the
    victim.
22) Crimes against corporate entities other than the
    government.
23) Crimes committed knowingly, willfully,
    deliberately.

McCleary admits that this list is "arbitrary and by no
means exhausts the dimensions which might underlie per-
ceptions of a crime's seriousness (1981: 283)." De-
spite the extensiveness of McCleary's list of dummy
variables, it does not substantially increase the
amount of variance explained by Rossi's classification
(1981: 283). The authors conclude the article by
stating that:

To the extent that our respondents are in consensus, the broader normative mechanisms cited by Rossi et al., such as general education and mass media exposure, are responsible. To the extent that our respondents are not in consensus, individual differences and experiences are responsible. Formal legal education is clearly one of the most important of these individual experiences (McCleary et al., 1981: 285).

As was stated previously, the conclusions of the McCleary et al. study both agree and disagree with conclusions from the Sellin and Wolfgang and Rossi et al. studies. The primary areas of disagreement may result from differences in samples. McCleary's pool is smaller, more homogeneous, and may be less generally representative than that of either Sellin and Wolfgang or Rossi et al.

Normandeau (1966) and Akman, Normandeau, and Turner (1967) attempted to apply the Sellin-Wolfgang index to a Canadian sample. Normandeau presented the pilot study for this project. Using fifteen offenses taken from the Sellin and Wolfgang criminal event list, Normandeau sampled 232 French Canadian students (177 males and 55 females). Using the ratio scaling and the same analytical techniques as Sellin and Wolfgang,
Normandeau found a linear relationship between his results and those of Sellin and Wolfgang. When the Montreal scores are reported by sex, approximately the same results are found. From this evidence Normandeau offers the conclusion that not only do Montreal and Philadelphia students agree on the ranking of crime seriousness, but also on the numerical evaluations of seriousness (1966: 174).

Akman, Normandeau, and Turner (1967) reported the results of the Canadian project. They sampled from thirteen groups of undergraduate students, one from each of the thirteen largest universities in Canada. In addition, they polled Canadian judges, male white collar workers, and officers of the Montreal Police Department. Using the same methodology and analysis as the Normandeau pilot study, Akman, Normandeau, and Turner found similar results. The correlations with the results of Sellin and Wolfgang were all high (above +0.90). The authors conclude by stating that they believe the methods developed by Sellin and Wolfgang are "highly reliable and stable" (1967: 336; emphasis in original) and by using a quote from Sellin and Wolfgang

A pervasive social agreement on what is serious and what is not appears to emerge and this
agreement transcends simple qualitative concordance; it extends to the estimated numerical degree of seriousness of these offenses (Sellin and Wolfgang in Akman, Normandeau, and Turner, 1966: 335).

White (1975) applied the seriousness scale of Sellin and Wolfgang in a test of offender and victim status on penalties. White attempted to discover whether there was support for the hypothesis that lower class offenders receive harsher penalties than higher class offenders. To test this, White developed twenty-seven paired offenses which identify both the offender and the victim as having a certain occupation. These pairs consisted of a criminal event which was committed by a male offender (of the same race of the respondent) against a male victim (also of the same race). The second item in the pair reversed the status of the offender and the victim while keeping the offense constant. None of White's respondents were shown both halves of any pair (1975: 412-413). Respondents were asked to assign a score of 0 (no penalty) to 11 (execution) as the penalty they felt should be assigned to each event.

The data were analyzed using regression techniques. White found that, contrary to his original hypothesis (and most of the available literature),
lower class offenders with higher class victims received a less severe penalty than when the victim and offender characteristics were reversed. While the directionality of the penalties assigned by respondents was clear and constant, none of the results were statistically significant. Analysis of variance showed that 32.1% of the variance could be explained by the severity of the offense. From this evidence, White concludes that, for his respondents (who were not connected with the criminal justice system), the status of the offender and the victim is relatively unimportant to penalty determination; the important variable is the seriousness of the offense.

Figlio (1975) used Sellin and Wolfgang's study as a basis for his replication. Figlio used 216 sociology students at the University of Pennsylvania as a retest of Sellin and Wolfgang's results. In addition, Figlio used 193 inmates of Rahway Prison and 524 residents of Annandale Farms juvenile detention center in rural New Jersey in an attempt to determine how offenders rate the seriousness of offenses (Figlio, 1975: 190). Figlio used twenty events drawn directly from the list of Sellin and Wolfgang and both the ratio and category techniques for measuring seriousness. One major difference between the studies of Figlio and Sellin and Wolfgang is that Figlio specified a male offender for
all events.

Over all, the responses from the Pennsylvania students and the offenders in Rahway and Annandale were similar. The Rahway inmates tended to see offenses as slightly less serious than the Annandale residents. The Annandale residents tended to see the offenses as slightly less serious than did the Pennsylvania students. The most serious offense for the Annandale and student samples was murder. The most serious offense for the Rahway inmates was rape. With few differences, the ranking of offenses was similar in each of the three groups. This ranking correlated highly with the original work of Sellin and Wolfgang (1975: 192).

Figlio's research sought to replicate Sellin and Wolfgang's study. Using a magnitude scale, it was found that in the ten years separating these two studies the students at Pennsylvania rated the same offenses as numerically less serious (i.e., the number assigned by Figlio's respondents was less than the number assigned by Sellin and Wolfgang's respondents). In general, the offenses in Figlio's study were rated numerically as approximately half as serious as the same offenses in Sellin and Wolfgang's work. The relative weights (as derived by the ratio scale) shifted only slightly. Despite the lowering of the absolute
scores of the offenses, relatively, the 1975 study evaluated offenses as slightly more serious. For example, Figlio's respondents scored death from assault as 181.3. Sellin and Wolfgang's respondents scored the same offense as 449.2. The drop in absolute scores is obvious. However, rape was scored by Figlio as 98.4 and by Sellin and Wolfgang as 186.3. Rape is, therefore, 54% as serious as death from assault for Figlio while it is 41% as serious for Sellin and Wolfgang. While the numerical score fell for Figlio, the relative weight between offenses became more pronounced (Figlio, 1975:197).

One of the major criticisms of Sellin and Wolfgang's study has been directed at the assumption of additivity (c.f., Blumenstein, 1974; Pease, Ireson, and Thorpe, 1974; Gottfredson, Young, and Laufer, 1980). Sellin and Wolfgang suggest that when a criminal event consists of several separate crimes, the seriousness score for that event is the summation of the component parts (Sellin and Wolfgang, 1978: 345). This additive nature is assumed rather than empirically shown by Sellin and Wolfgang. Several authors have questioned this assumption. Wellford and Wiatrowski (1975) examine the issue in some detail. The authors point out that if the scale of offense seriousness is not additive, then the usefulness of a scale of crime...
seriousness is limited to those criminal events which incorporate only one crime. As such, the general utility of such a scale is limited. An accidental sample of 118 Florida State University students was used to test the additivity assumption. Given two lists (one of single event crimes and one of multiple event crimes), the students used a magnitude scale to assign seriousness. The correlation between the resulting scales was +0.969. This suggests that the assumptions of additivity are valid (Wellford and Wiatrowski, 1975: 182). It should also be noted that this study adds support to the original work of Sellin and Wolfgang, reporting a correlation of +0.905 between the scores on the twenty-one events used in both studies.

Another major criticism of Sellin and Wolfgang's research lies in the area of utility. Blumstein (1974) looked at both the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) and the Sellin-Wolfgang index. UCR data for the years 1960-1972 were collected and compared to the seriousness scale of Sellin and Wolfgang. Crime patterns show that far more minor than major offenses are committed. By analyzing the scores of the offenses in the UCR, Blumstein discovered that there is a near perfect correlation between the simple rates of the data from the
UCR and the results of the relatively complex Sellin and Wolfgang index. Blumstein concludes that because of the high correlation among the reported index crimes, deriving partly from their increasing trend over the period [of the study], the regular Sellin-Wolfgang index is almost perfectly linearly correlated with the FBI index, and so provides little additional information (1974: 863-864).

The assumption behind this conclusion is that of parsimony. Why should criminologists use the complex methodology of Sellin and Wolfgang if the same data can be discovered in the numbers of UCR?

Wellford and Wiatrowski (1975) also address this question. They suggest that Blumstein is guilty of a type of ecological fallacy by asserting that "relationships found at the aggregate level (i.e., relationships of crude UCR rate and average seriousness score) hold for the event level of analysis (i.e., relationships between legal category and event seriousness score) (1975: 185)." The response to Blumstein's assertions is that when the level of analysis differs, comparisons similar to his cannot be made. Sellin and Wolfgang analyze individual criminal events. The data in the UCR are a collection of local, state, and national crimes. Consequently, the UCR data are aggregated and on a different level of analysis than the analyses of
Sellin and Wolfgang.

Blumstein's arguments can also be criticized on other grounds. The index offenses to which he refers are only eight crimes. These are the crimes which would be at or near the top of any listing of crime seriousness. Blumstein does not address the majority of criminal behavior which is not included in the eight index offenses. Additionally, Wolfgang (1985) points out that an increase of one hundred murders will affect the UCR rates in the same way as an increase on 100 burglaries. This increase only points to the fact that official data look only at the sheer number of crimes, not at their relative seriousness. Therefore, the seriousness of offenses, which is what Sellin and Wolfgang were interested in, is not addressed by Blumstein's criticism. Where Blumstein is concerned with the criminal behavior, Sellin and Wolfgang are concerned with the seriousness of that behavior.
Chapter II
Methodology

There were five stages in this project. These stages included constructing a list of criminal events, identifying the average prescribed sanctions for each, collecting data from respondents, reporting my overall seriousness scale, and comparing the results of my scale to prescribed sanctions. The list of crimes was one of the first problems of the research. I chose to use the 140 criminal descriptions used by Rossi et al. (1974).

The decision to use the criminal events of Rossi et al. rather than the ones of Sellin and Wolfgang was based on several factors. The Sellin and Wolfgang list sampled disproportionately from property crimes. It also ignored white collar crimes. The criminal event list of Rossi et al. corrects both of these problems. It seems that the Rossi list comes closer than the list of Sellin and Wolfgang to encompassing the total range of criminal behavior. It is not complete, but seems very compas-
sing. It includes both felonies and misdemeanors. It includes offenses of the major types described in other research (e.g. violent, property, and victimless crimes). For example, the Dictionary of Criminal Justice Data Terminology (U.S. Dept. of Justice, 1981:225; see also Gould Publications, 1984:221) presents a list of twenty-one types of crimes which were suggested for adoption by reporting agencies. Of these offenses, Rossi et al. include twenty (95%) in their original sample (which was completed in 1974, seven years prior to the Department of Justice list). The one offense in the Department of Justice list which was not included by Rossi was escape.

In addition, the Rossi list was chosen because of its emphasis on the act rather than the actor (this is also a characteristic of the Sellin-Wolfgang index; see Turner, introduction to Sellin and Wolfgang, 1978:viii). In only a very few of the criminal events is the sex of either the offender or the victim implied or expressed (i.e. offense 123; "Engaging in male homosexual acts with consenting adults" indicates males as both offender and victim: Rossi et al., 1974:229). None of the cases imply race, age, or other demographic characteristics. This emphasis was chosen to avoid the complications from biases which may confound the results (c.f. Figlio, 1975; White, 1975; to a lesser degree Riedel, 1975; Walker, 1978).

The second step in my study was to determine the
sanctions required by Virginia law. Where the listed crimes had only one sanction listed, that sanction was recorded as the legal sanction. Most prescribed sanctions in Virginia stem from the class of the crime. Two broad classes (felony and misdemeanor) are broken into ten classes (six felony classes and four misdemeanor classes). A Class 1 felony is the most serious class, carrying a prescribed sanction of execution or life imprisonment. A Class 4 misdemeanor is the least serious class with a prescribed penalty of a fine of no more than $100 (Virginia Code of Laws, 1982:sections 18.2-9 through 18.2-11). I have used several basic and commonsense assumptions to create the severity of sanction scale. It was assumed that capital punishment is more serious than imprisonment plus a fine which is more serious than imprisonment which is, in turn, more serious than a fine. In addition, it was assumed that the higher the number of years of imprisonment, the more severe the sanction. From these assumptions, and the ten classes of crimes, I constructed the severity of sanction scale for the criminal events as prescribed in Virginia statutes. The third and fourth steps were to create the questionnaire and collect respondent data. I chose to use the category scale of Sellin and Wolfgang and Rossi et al. In this measurement strategy, the respondents were asked to write a number
from one to nine inclusive (with nine as most serious) which they believe corresponds to the seriousness of each offense. Analysis was performed on the results using the arithmetic means of each offense. This allowed me to rank the criminal events from most to least serious and assign a number to each. The results of the ranking and scoring were then compared to those in the Rossi et al study.

Some changes were necessary as compared to the original Rossi study. Logistical considerations limited this research to a local level. As such, offenses which are criminal only at the federal level were excluded. I also excluded offenses related to income tax fraud or evasion. While these offenses are illegal on the state level (on state income tax returns), the same offenses on federal returns carry no state sanction. In addition, offenses which did not violate Virginia law were removed from the list, leaving a total of 120 events (see Appendix D). Some of the excluded data were used in separate analyses.

It was decided to conduct this survey on the local level for several reasons. It was hoped that a local sample would increase the response rate and create easier follow up (e.g. of questionnaires which were not returned). Since I used a relatively small sample of respondents (drawn from the Williamsburg area telephone directory; see discussion below), a high return rate was
necessary. Secondly, replications of the Sellin and Wolfgang study suggest that the responses of the participants from diverse geographic and socioeconomic positions are remarkably similar (see Turner, introduction to Sellin and Wolfgang, 1978:vi; see also Review of the Literature section). In addition, the Sellin and Wolfgang Index was drawn from Philadelphia while the Rossi et al. replication (1974), possibly the best replication to date, was done using Baltimore residents. The use of a single local community in not new for this type of study. While tradition alone is hardly a justification for a particular methodological decision, the tradition coupled with the severely limited budget of this project prompted the decision to sample from Williamsburg and the surrounding area.

It was decided to use a respondent pool of 500 for several reasons. While this research is designed to test the study of Sellin and Wolfgang, the criminal event list and general methodology of Rossi et al. was used. Rossi used a subject pool of 200 Baltimore residents. In addition, the subject pool of McCleary et al. was 180 people. Subject pools near 200 appear to be the norm for this type of research. With a pool of 500 drawn from Williamsburg and the surrounding areas, I sampled 1.5% of the population of 32,633 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983). Rossi
sampled 0.009% of the Baltimore population. There are 172 respondents for this research (0.5% of the area population; 34.4% of the total number of questionnaires mailed). When these factors were considered together, the decision on the size of the subject pool seemed a sound one.

The list of respondents was constructed by using the local telephone directory. Using a systematic sampling plan, I began randomly (on page 6) and selected every seventh person. When 500 names and addresses were identified (names without complete listed addresses were discarded), the questionnaires were prepared and mailed. Babbie (1983:143) points out that this particular sampling plan may discriminate against the poor by excluding persons with no telephones. In addition, this sample will be biased against those persons with unlisted telephone numbers. It is felt that these biases did not significantly affect the results of the research.

It should be pointed out that this sample plan is appropriate for locales with a relatively small population. Due to the relatively small size of the telephone directory in Williamsburg it was possible to sample from the vast majority of listed persons. For an area with a larger population (such as the neighboring city of Newport News or a major metropolitan area), a different selection scheme must be used. The first step would be to identify
the proportion of the total population the questionnaire would reach. This figure can then be used to identify the number of listings between potential respondents. This scheme could then be used to select a sample in which no letters of the alphabet are systematically excluded. The sample would then be representative whereas the scheme used in this research could result in a sample biased against those possible respondents with late alphabetical names.

The final stage was to examine the seriousness scales and compare the offense seriousness values to the sanction severity scores. The final goal of the project was to determine how well the perceived seriousness of crime correlates with the Virginia Code of Laws. This correlation was slightly problematic. My research was conducted at the interval level of measurement (a level where there is a definite order to the responses as well as an equal interval between categories). The severity of sanction scale was measured on the ordinal level (where there is a distinct order to the rankings without the assumption of equal intervals between the classes of crime). The usual measure of association used where both variables are at the interval level is the Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson's r). However, r is not entirely appropriate here due to the difference in level of
measurement between the scales. Blalock (1979:444) has suggested that, given this situation, both Pearson's r and a rank-order correlation coefficient should be calculated. Therefore, it was decided to use both r and Kendall's tau c as measures of association between these two variables. Tau c was chosen over tau b due to the fact that tau c compensates for ties on the respective variables whereas Tau b does not. While Kendall's tau is not exactly the same as Pearson's r, the two measures of association are analogous. Kendall's tau, like r, is measured between -1.0 and +1.0. For sample sizes of ten or larger, tau is similar in interpretation to r (for a more complete discussion, see Blalock, 1979 and Siegel, 1956).
Chapter III
Results and Conclusions

As was pointed out in the Review of the Literature section, the numerous replications of Sellin and Wolfgang have been very supportive of the original research, often with correlations at or above 0.80. The research described here continues that trend.

The research described here is actually a replication of the study of Rossi et al. rather than Sellin and Wolfgang. As such, direct comparisons with Sellin and Wolfgang are problematic. As was described and explained earlier, the criminal event list of Rossi et al. was chosen over that of Sellin and Wolfgang. One of the major findings of Rossi, as well as others whose findings have supported those of Sellin and Wolfgang, is that there is a certain degree of consensus on the relative seriousness of crimes. There can be no doubt that the Rossi's results are supportive of Sellin and Wolfgang. The results of the
present research are also supportive ($r = 0.905$) of Rossi et al. and, thus, of Sellin and Wolfgang.

Recalling the limitations on the sample, the following findings seem important. There were a total of 172 returned questionnaires, for a response rate of 34.4%. Twenty items on the questionnaires were answered by the entire sample; all other items were answered by either 77 or 95, depending on which questionnaire was returned. With this response rate and logistical limitations of the study in mind, it was decided that a follow-up questionnaire was not necessary. There were 111 male and 61 female respondents. Twenty-six respondents reported completing high school, forty-four reported some college education, forty-six reported completing college, and fifty-six reported some post-baccalaureate work. It was originally expected that race, the third demographic variable discussed by Rossi, would be included in my analysis. When the questionnaires were coded, it was discovered that there were only three respondents who described themselves as non-white (two males, one female, all three of whom were black). Accordingly, the race variable is not considered in the analysis. See Table One for relevant demographic variations within the sample.

Rossi et al. conducted their research in Baltimore in 1974. The average score for a crime in Rossi's survey was 6.2682. The residents of Williamsburg saw crime as
slightly more serious; the average in this study was 6.4404. Note that the difference between these two averages is only 0.1722. There is very little difference when gender variation is considered; the average score for men is 6.4321 and 6.4462 for women. This gender variation is smaller than that found by Rossi. Rossi's female respondents rated crimes as 0.8 units more serious than his male respondents (Rossi et al., 1974:227).

Educational variations are displayed here, but they

Table One

Demographic Breakdown of the Cole Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Cole %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cole (males)</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with H.S. education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with some college</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with college degree</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with some grad school</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole (females)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with H.S. education</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with some college</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with college degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with some grad school</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole (total)</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

are not used in the analysis. It was felt that these data are misleading for two reasons. First, the largest proportion of respondents in my research had at least
some graduate school training. Rossi's sample consisted primarily of high school graduates. My sample is disproportionately more highly educated than that of Rossi et al. In addition, four subgroups were found to comprise less than ten percent of the sample (males with a high school education, females with a high school education, some college, and a college degree). It was felt that these small subgroups, as well as the disproportionately well educated sample, could bias the results and affect the generalizability.

As was stated previously, correlational analysis was the major form of analysis used in this research. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was used to measure the association between the Rossi results and the results of my research as well as between all possible variations between Rossi and my major subgroups. The overall correlation between the results found by Rossi and the results of this study is 0.905. The total explained variance is 81%. The lowest correlation of any group was between the Rossi sample as a whole and Cole females with a correlational value of 0.898. The single highest correlation was between my total sample and the male subsample (0.978). This correlation should, however, be interpreted with the reminder that my sample included far more males than females; as such it may not be indica-
tive of the actual relationship. With only the one listed example, all correlation coefficients were 0.905 or above. These statistics suggest further evidence of the existence of a consensus on crime seriousness. (See Table Two for a listing of the Pearson correlation coefficients and the amount of variance explained in each case.) Both Pearson's r and Kendall's tau c were used to examine the degree of linear agreement between the scales of crime seriousness and sanction severity. The correlation (Pearson's r) between the sanction scale and the crime seriousness scale was computed at 0.7039 (p = .01) The nonparametric rank order correlation coefficient (tau c) was computed at 0.5994 (p < .001). These statistics suggest that there is a strong positive relationship between the variables. It should be remembered here that Kendall's tau and Pearson's r are analogous, but not equal. Frequently, tau c will be less than r due to the nature of the computation of the statistic. So both statistics are indicative of a relatively strong positive relationship.

The major differences between public perception of crime seriousness and official sanction severity lie primarily in the areas of the "victimless" crimes involving drug and sex offenses. This is also a significant area of difference between respondents in my study and those in Rossi's. These offenses are ranked differently in the two
Table Two
Correlation Coefficients and Explained Variance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations between:</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>R²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rossi and Cole</td>
<td>.905*</td>
<td>.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossi and Cole (males)</td>
<td>.913*</td>
<td>.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rossi and Cole (females)</td>
<td>.898*</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole and Cole (males)</td>
<td>.978*</td>
<td>.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole and Cole (females)</td>
<td>.968*</td>
<td>.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole (males) and Cole (females)</td>
<td>.957*</td>
<td>.916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .001

Note: This table shows the comparisons of the two studies and the subgroups using the scores on the items rather than the individual respondents. The unit of analysis here is thus the category and not the individual.

studies, with an average difference of a decrease of 30.31 units of seriousness. A unit of difference here is equivalent to a one place change in the seriousness ranking. When these offenses are removed from the correlational analyses, the correlation between this study and Rossi's is 0.9319 (p < .001). This indicates an even stronger relationship between the Rossi sample and my study among the crimes with an identifiable and tangible victim (see Table Three for a list of the victimless crimes included in the crime listing and their differential rankings).

While Table Three is unsatisfactory as a complete
Table Three
Differences in the Rankings and Scores of Victimless Crimes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offense</th>
<th>Cole Rank</th>
<th>Rossi Rank</th>
<th>Cole Score</th>
<th>Rossi Score</th>
<th>Rank Difference</th>
<th>Score Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selling heroin</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.474</td>
<td>8.293</td>
<td>-42</td>
<td>-0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling LSD</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.076</td>
<td>7.949</td>
<td>-49</td>
<td>-0.873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling Pep pills</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5.769</td>
<td>6.867</td>
<td>-44</td>
<td>-1.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling marijuana</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>5.270</td>
<td>6.969</td>
<td>-57</td>
<td>-1.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using heroin</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.564</td>
<td>7.520</td>
<td>-68</td>
<td>-1.956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using LSD</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5.423</td>
<td>5.557</td>
<td>-36</td>
<td>-1.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Pep pills</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>3.785</td>
<td>5.656</td>
<td>-34</td>
<td>-1.898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seduction of a minor</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>7.101</td>
<td>7.021</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling pornographic magazines</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>4.063</td>
<td>4.526</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-0.463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliciting for prostitution</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>3.937</td>
<td>5.144</td>
<td>-19</td>
<td>-1.207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in male homosexual activities</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>3.557</td>
<td>4.736</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-1.179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in female homosexual activities</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.141</td>
<td>4.729</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>-1.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proposing homosexual practices to an adult</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>3.987</td>
<td>5.140</td>
<td>-17</td>
<td>-1.153</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
listing of victimless crimes, it does include the ones used in this research. It must be pointed out here that this listing is essentially arbitrary in the sense that neither Rossi et al. nor myself made any systematic attempt to include either all victimless crimes or even a representative sample. Since there was no attempt at elaboration or refinement of the Rossi listing, the thirteen crimes included in this list are not indicative of victimless crimes in general. When taken as a group, these victimless crimes have an average score of -30.31 units of seriousness when compared between the two studies discussed here, accounting for approximately 61% of the variance. An examination of Table Three points to two obvious differences between the victimless crimes. The first is that there is a large and striking difference between the changes associated with drug offenses as compared to sex offenses. The only crime in this subcategory to increase in seriousness was selling pornographic magazines. The total range of change between sex offenses runs from a decrease of 19 units to an increase of 3 units of seriousness. In contrast to this, drug related offenses consistently decreased in seriousness, with a range of decrease from -68 to -34 units. The second difference in this table is that, with the exception of selling marijuana (which was not compared to using marijuana), the use of drugs is perceived in both studies as
less serious than the sale of the same drug.

One other way of looking at the differences in these criminal events is to look at the differences in absolute scores rather than ranks. The average change in scores of these victimless sex offenses from Rossi's study to mine was -1.153. The only crime to increase in seriousness through this method of looking at the changes was seduction of a minor.

With the two previously noted exceptions (one from the ranking scale and one from the scale of relative scores), the Williamsburg residents saw these victimless crimes as less serious than did the Baltimore residents. These victimless crimes constitute a significant number of outlying points from the linear correlation line; when these crimes are removed from the analysis the correlation becomes 0.9319. This is a significantly stronger relationship than that of the study as a whole.

The reasons for these differences in the rankings of the drug offenses are not clear. It has been suggested to the author through discussion that the difference in rankings for the drug offenses reflects a possible change in societal values, norms, and definitions. Skinner (1987) has suggested that the relatively serious scores reported by Rossi may be a reflection of a perception of a set of cultural definitions unique to the early 1970's.
At that time, drug use could be seen as a major form of rebellion against the status quo. During the eleven years separating this study from Rossi's, the cultural association between drug use and rebellion may have deteriorated to a point where the two concepts are no longer necessarily linked in the same way. As such, the "danger" of drug use (as perceived by the larger society) is somewhat reduced, thereby implying that the perceived seriousness of drug use has decreased in importance. The application of this same line of reasoning to the sex offenses is not as clear due to the fact that the sex offenses do not have the same absolute trend toward decreasing seriousness that the drug offenses do; one offense increased in seriousness while five decreased. Since the trend for the sex offenses is not as clear cut, I can only suggest that the same processes are taking place, although to a lesser degree. As was stated previously, the change in the rankings of the victimless crimes is large and striking. The magnitude of these changes, however, is less than the change in rank may lead one to believe. The range of difference in the average score for these offenses runs from +0.080 to -1.956 with an average change of -1.153. By looking at only the rankings of the items, we may well be overstating the differences between the two studies.

As was previously stated, no literature which discussed a possible explanation for the relative decrease in
victimless crimes was located. Since this project was not designed to assess a change in cultural values and definitions, the previous discussion must be treated as speculative rather than empirical. A longitudinal study would be of great assistance in addressing these issues surrounding a possible change in cultural values and in empirically verifying any such speculation.
Chapter IV
Discussion and Conclusions

As has been previously discussed, the literature on crime seriousness scales tends to be overwhelmingly supportive of the original work of Sellin and Wolfgang. The work discussed here is no exception. Data from the current study support the Sellin and Wolfgang and Rossi et al. studies. Differences may be explained by several factors. First, as was previously mentioned, eleven years have elapsed between the two studies. In addition, differences in specific features of the questions and the two local areas undoubtedly produce some variance.

I would not suggest from these comparisons that I have measured a change in social attitudes on crime seriousness. Since the two studies discussed here are in different locales, this comparison is risky. Still, the
current study suggests that the results of such a comparison could be revealing. The question of whether this analysis has measured a true change in social values is one which should be addressed by future research.

One major conclusion I can draw from the overall comparison concerns methodology. The comparability between the two studies suggests that a mail questionnaire format is viable for this kind of research problem. While it is certain that there will be some differences in the results due to methodological differences, a correlation of 0.905 indicates that these differences are not major. The correlation for the sanction severity and crime seriousness scales generated for this research is 0.7039 (Pearson's r) while Kendall's tau c equals 0.5994. While these statistics describe a moderate association between the scales, they suggest that a real and important relationship exists.

One interpretation of the consistencies in crime seriousness rankings is that it reflects what Durkheim (1933:80) called the common or collective conscience. This common conscience can be seen as "the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society." It is appropriate that the existence of a common conscience be discussed in relation to crime; Durkheim (1933:80-81) defined crime simply as a violation of the collective conscience. As he points out, an act
does not violate the common conscience because it is a crime; it is a crime because it violates the common conscience. This conception suggests a social definition of crime and criminality. It also suggests that crimes and the relative perception of crime seriousness may vary over time and across communities. No studies have yet been published which discuss the possible existence of this consensus on any but a local level. (Marvin Wolfgang has been working on a national study with the assistance of the United States Department of Justice. The discussion of this study is not yet available; U.S. Department of Justice, 1983:5). Future research with broader and more representative samples may shed light on the extent and pervasiveness of a societal "collective conscience." It may also point to conditions under which social meanings, especially as they relate to societal definitions of crime and crime seriousness, vary.

There are two major contributions stemming from this research. The first is that it adds support to the original work of Sellin and Wolfgang and extends the possibility of even broader agreement. The second major contribution made by this research is the correlation between the crime seriousness and sanction scales. No previous research was found which has examined this relationship. As has been previously stated, there is a
relatively strong positive relationship between the two scales generated for this research. I cannot attempt to generalize the relatively high correlational statistics found between the Williamsburg area and Virginia law to other states and legal systems. Future research may reveal consistent relationships in other geographic areas.

This research also suggests that state-required sanctions and the public views of crime seriousness do not match perfectly. Despite the possibility of a relative consensus on crime seriousness, perceptions of crime seriousness may differ between certain groups in the general population. It is certainly possible that the characteristics of lawmakers will thereby create slightly different perceptions of seriousness than those of the people surveyed in this project. Since not all individuals will internalize norms and values to the same degree, a small amount of individual variation must be expected. Additionally, perfect concordance cannot be reasonably expected in a representational system of law-making; a perfect democracy with all members having equal input into sanction severity could possibly come closer to this goal than representational government.

This research does allow us to objectively measure the amount of concordance between the public and legal views of crime seriousness. This relationship should be further specified in subsequent research. Some of the
questions involved in this subsequent research could focus on the conditions under which sanctions most closely parallel collective judgments of crime seriousness as well as the policy implications of decreasing levels of concordance. Although it is a largely utopian view, the study of public views about crime seriousness could well contribute to a reorganization of legal sanctions in an effort to reduce the gap between public perceptions and legal sanctions with regard to various criminal events. This type of study could also lead to a more pragmatic and efficient allocation of increasingly scarce resources (e.g. funding, labor, and prison space). Additionally, studies of crime seriousness could lead to a closer representation of the people when legislatures consider the revision of old laws as well as the creation of new ones.
Appendix A

The Rossi et al. (1974) list of events

Listed in order of seriousness from most to least:

1. Planned killing of a policeman
2. Planned killing of a person for a fee
3. Selling heroin
4. Forcible rape after breaking into a home
5. Impulsive killing of a policeman
6. Planned killing of a spouse
7. Planned killing of an acquaintance
8. Hijacking an airplane
9. Armed robbery of a bank
10. Selling LSD
11. Assault with a gun on a policeman
12. Kidnapping for ransom
13. Forcible rape of a stranger in a park
14. Killing someone after an argument over a business transaction
15. Assassination of a public official
16. Killing someone during a serious argument
17. Making sexual advances to young children
18. Assault with a gun on a stranger
19. Impulsive killing of a spouse
20. Impulsive killing of a stranger
21. Forcible rape of a stranger
22. Impulsive killing of an acquaintance
23. Deliberately starting a fire which results in a death
24. Assault with a gun on a stranger
25. Manufacturing and selling drugs known to be harmful to users
26. Knowingly selling contaminated food which results in a death
27. Armed robbery of a company payroll
28. Using heroin
29. Assault with a gun on an acquaintance
30. Armed holdup of a taxi driver
31. Beating up a child
32. Armed robbery of a neighborhood druggist
33. Causing auto accident death while driving when drunk
34. Selling secret documents to a foreign government
35. Armed street holdup stealing $200 in cash
36. Killing someone in a bar room free-for-all
37. Deliberately starting a fire in an occupied building
38. Assault with a gun on a spouse
39. Armed robbery of a supermarket
40. Assault with a gun in the course of a riot
41. Armed hijacking of a truck
42. Deserting to the enemy in time of war
43. Armed street holdup stealing $25 in cash
44. Armed robbery of an armored truck
45.Spying for a foreign government
46. Killing a pedestrian while exceeding the speed limit
47. Seduction of a minor
48. Beating up a policeman
49. Selling marijuana
50. Father-daughter incest
51. Causing the death of an employee by failing to repair machinery
52. Breaking and entering a bank
53. Mugging and stealing $25 in cash
54. Selling pep pills
55. Cashing stolen payroll checks
56. Mugging and stealing $200 in cash
57. Causing the death of a tenant by neglecting to repair heating plant
58. Killing spouse's lover after catching them together
59. Blackmail
60. Advocating overthrow of the government
61. Neglecting to care for own children
62. Forcible rape of a former spouse
63. Manufacturing and selling autos known to be dangerously defective
64. Beating up a stranger
65. Using LSD
66. Driving while drunk
67. Practicing medicine without a license
68. Burglary of a home stealing a color TV set
69. Knowingly passing counterfeit money
70. Beating up someone in a riot
71. Performing illegal abortions
72. Passing worthless checks for more than $500
73. A public official accepting bribes in return for favors
74. Employee embezzling company funds
75. Knowingly selling stolen stocks and bonds
76. Refusing to obey lawful order of a policeman
77. Burglary of a home stealing a portable transistor radio
78. Theft of a car for the purpose of resale
79. Knowingly selling defective cars as completely safe
80. Burglary of an appliance store stealing several TV sets
81. Looting goods in a riot
82. Knowingly selling stolen goods
83. Leaving the scene of an accident
84. Printing counterfeit $10 bills
85. Shoplifting a diamond ring from a jewelry store
86. Mother-son incest
87. Theft of a car for joy-riding
88. Intimidating a witness in a court case
89. Brother-sister incest
90. Knowingly selling worthless stocks as valuable investments
91. Beating up a spouse
92. Selling liquor to minors
93. Burglary of a factory stealing machine tools
94. Using stolen credit cards
95. Using pep pills
96. Joining a riot
97. Lending money at illegal interest rates
98. Knowingly buying stolen goods
99. Refusal to serve when drafted in peacetime
100. Resisting arrest
101. Impersonating a policeman
102. Using false identification to obtain goods from a store
103. Bribing a public official to obtain favors
104. Passing worthless checks involving less than $100
105. Desertion from military service in peacetime
106. Under-reporting income on income tax return
107. Willfully neglecting to file income tax returns
108. Soliciting for prostitution
109. Proposing homosexual practices to an adult
110. Overcharging on repairs to automobiles
111. Shoplifting a dress from a department store
112. Beating up an acquaintance
113. Driving while license is suspended
114. Pouring paint over someone's car
115. Shoplifting a pair of shoes from a shoe store
116. Overcharging for credit in selling goods
117. Shoplifting a carton of cigarettes from a supermarket
118. Smuggling goods to avoid paying import duties
119. Killing a suspected burglar in home
120. False claims of dependents on income tax returns
121. Knowingly using inaccurate scales in weighing meat for sale
122. Refusal to make essential repairs to rental property
123. Engaging in male homosexual acts with consenting adults
124. Engaging in female homosexual acts with consenting adults
125. Breaking a plate glass window in a shop
126. Fixing prices of a consumer product like gasoline
127. Fixing prices of machines sold to business
128. Selling pornographic magazines
129. Shoplifting a book in a bookstore
130. Repeated refusal to obey parents
131. Joining a prohibited demonstration
132. False advertising of a headache remedy
133. Refusal to pay alimony
134. Refusal to pay parking fines
135. Disturbing the peace
136. Repeated truancy
137. Repeated running away from home
138. Loitering in public places
139. Refusal to answer census taker
140. Being drunk in public places

---

Note: The crimes are listed in the order of seriousness (the lower the number of the event, the more serious the crime as found by Rossi et al.

Appendix B
The Questionnaires

The questionnaires used for this research used the 140 criminal events listed by Rossi et al. (1974). Each questionnaire consisted of sixty discrete items and twenty items which were repeated for a total of eighty items. The original questionnaires were printed on both sides of a legal size (8 x 14 inch) sheet of white paper. They are reduced and reproduced here on a letter size (8 x 11 inch) sheet to conform with the thesis size requirements of the College of William and Mary. The same cover letter was used for each questionnaire. The identification phrase (e.g. "Questionnaire One") at the top of each page did not appear on the original questionnaires mailed. It has been added here to differentiate between the two. Additionally, page numbers not appearing in the original questionnaire were also added here.
July 10, 1985

I am conducting research on public opinions about crimes and their relative seriousness. You have been selected as part of a sample to represent Williamsburg area residents. The success of my research depends on your willingness to take 10 or 15 minutes to complete the attached questionnaire.

Your responses will remain anonymous and you will not be identified as part of any research effort. The results of the survey will be reported in summary form, without reference to the identities of the respondents.

The questionnaire asks you to rate crime events according to your belief about their relative seriousness. I am interested in your opinion, not your knowledge of the law. You are asked to rate the seriousness of each event from one (not very serious) to nine (extremely serious). Please do your best to rate each event.

Please take a few minutes now to complete the questionnaire. Thank you in advance for your help. If you have any questions or you would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at 253-4327 at the College of William and Mary.

Sincerely,

William D. Cole
The following 80 items represent crimes. Please rate each crime on a scale from one (not very serious) to nine (extremely serious). For example, if you feel that a crime is extremely serious, rate it as 9. If you feel that a crime is of moderate seriousness, rate it as 5. Remember that you can use any number from one to nine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Crime Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>Employee embezzling company funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>Assault with a gun on a spouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>Causing the death of a tenant by neglecting to repair heating plant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4)</td>
<td>Driving while drunk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5)</td>
<td>Joining a riot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6)</td>
<td>Using pep pills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7)</td>
<td>Selling LSD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8)</td>
<td>Armed holdup of a taxi driver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9)</td>
<td>Soliciting for prostitution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10)</td>
<td>Shoplifting a pair of shoes from a shoe store.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11)</td>
<td>Breaking and entering a bank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12)</td>
<td>Armed robbery of a company payroll.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13)</td>
<td>Making sexual advances to young children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14)</td>
<td>Bribing a public official to obtain favors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15)</td>
<td>False advertising of a headache remedy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16)</td>
<td>Selling liquor to minors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17)</td>
<td>Mugging and stealing $25 cash.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18)</td>
<td>Refusal to make essential repairs to rental property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19)</td>
<td>Intimidating a witness in a court case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20)</td>
<td>Spying for a foreign government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21)</td>
<td>Burglary of a home; stealing a portable transistor radio.</td>
</tr>
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<td>22)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>23)</td>
<td>Armed robbery of a neighborhood druggist.</td>
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<td>24)</td>
<td>Killing someone after a serious argument.</td>
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<td>25)</td>
<td>Practicing medicine without a license.</td>
</tr>
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<td>26)</td>
<td>Refusing to obey lawful order of a policeman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27)</td>
<td>Willfully neglecting to file an income tax return.</td>
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<td>Desertion from the military in peacetime.</td>
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<td>False claims of dependents on income tax returns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36)</td>
<td>Looting goods in a riot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37)</td>
<td>Repeated running away from home.</td>
</tr>
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<td>38)</td>
<td>Causing the death of an employee by neglecting to repair machinery.</td>
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<td>39)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40)</td>
<td>Forcible rape of a former spouse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questionnaire One

41) Knowingly buying stolen goods.
42) Selling pornographic magazines.
43) Passing worthless checks involving less than $100.
44) Seduction of a minor.
45) Refusal to pay parking fines.
46) Using stolen credit cards.
47) Forcible rape after breaking into a home.
48) Breaking a plate glass window in a shop.
49) Deliberately starting a fire in an occupied building.
50) Smuggling goods to avoid paying import duties.

51) Shoplifting a book in a bookstore.
52) Loitering in public places.
53) Planned killing of a person for a fee.
54) Killing a suspected burglar in home.
55) Beating up a spouse.
56) Blackmail.
57) Assault with a gun on a policeman.
58) Killing a pedestrian while exceeding the speed limit.
59) Mugging and stealing $200 cash.
60) Selling secret documents to a foreign government.

61) Planned killing of a spouse.
62) Refusal to answer census taker.
63) Knowingly passing counterfeit money.
64) Knowingly selling defective used cars as completely safe.
65) Assassination of a public official.
66) Deliberately starting a fire which results in a death.
67) Neglecting to care for own children.
68) Fixing prices of machines sold to businesses.
69) Knowingly selling stolen stocks and bonds.
70) Selling pep pills.

71) Burglary of a home stealing a color TV set.
72) Impulsive killing of a stranger.
73) Theft of a car for the purpose of resale.
74) Joining a prohibited demonstration.
75) Armed robbery of an armored truck.
76) Armed robbery of a supermarket.
77) Killing someone after an argument over business transaction.
78) Beating up a child.
79) Selling heroin.
80) Selling marijuana.

Biographical Information

Age: _____
Sex: M ( ) F ( )
Race: White ( ) Black ( ) Hispanic ( )
Native American ( ) Asian ( ) Other ( )
Education: High School ( )
(highest Some College ( )
level College Graduate ( )
completed) Graduate School ( )
Occlusion: ____________________________
Questionnaire Two

The following 80 items represent crimes. Please rate each crime on a scale from one (not very serious) to nine (extremely serious). For example, if you feel that a crime is extremely serious, rate it as 9. If you feel that a crime is of moderate seriousness, rate it as 5. Remember that you can use any number from one to nine.

1) Employee embezzling company funds.
2) Disturbing the peace.
3) Burglary of a factory; stealing machine tools.
4) Passing worthless checks for more than $500.
5) Proposing homosexual acts to an adult.
6) Using heroin.
7) Using LSD.
8) Armed hijacking of a truck.
9) Beating up someone in a riot.
10) Repeated truancy.
11) Impersonating a police officer.
12) Printing counterfeit $10 bills.
13) Assault with a gun in the course of a riot.
14) Lending money at illegal interest rates.
15) Assault with a gun on a stranger.
16) Beating up an acquaintance.
17) Mugging and stealing $25 cash.
18) Shoplifting a dress from a department store.
19) Theft of a car for joy-riding.
20) Killing spouse's lover after catching them together.

21) Burglary of a home; stealing a portable transistor radio.
22) Overcharging for credit in selling goods.
23) Armed robbery of a neighborhood druggist.
24) Repeated refusal to obey parents.
25) Practicing medicine without a license.
26) Refusing to obey lawful order of a policeman.
27) Willfully neglecting to file income tax return.
28) Refusal to pay alimony.
29) Shoplifting a carton of cigarettes from a supermarket.
30) Impulsive killing of an acquaintance.

31) Resisting arrest.
32) Beating up a policeman.
33) Armed robbery of a bank.
34) Manufacturing and selling drugs known to be harmful to users.
35) Hijacking an airplane.
36) A public official accepting bribes in return for favors.
37) Repeated running away from home.
38) Fixing prices of a consumer product like gasoline.
39) Planned killing of an acquaintance.
40) Knowingly selling stolen goods.
Questionnaire Two

41) Engaging in female homosexual acts with consenting adults.
42) Armed street holdup stealing $200 cash.
43) Passing worthless checks for less than $100.
44) Knowingly selling worthless stocks as valuable investments.
45) Refusal to pay parking fines.
46) Knowingly selling contaminated food which results in a death.
47) Forcible rape after breaking into a home.
48) Performing illegal abortions.
49) Pouring paint over someone's car.
50) Manufacturing and selling autos known to be dangerously defective.

51) Shoplifting a book in a bookstore.
52) Driving while license is suspended.
53) Cashing stolen payroll checks.
54) Killing a suspected burglar in home.
55) Assault with a gun on an acquaintance.
56) Shoplifting a diamond ring from a jewelry store.
57) Being drunk in public places.
58) Overcharging on repairs to automobiles.
59) Advocating overthrow of the government.
60) Selling secret documents to a foreign government.

61) Planned killing of a stranger.
62) Beating up a stranger.
63) Brother-sister incest.
64) Using false identification to obtain goods from a store.
65) Forcible rape of a stranger in a park.
66) Leaving the scene of an accident.
67) Armed street holdup stealing $25 cash.
68) Knowingly selling stolen stocks and bonds.
69) Under-reporting income on income tax return.
70) Burglary of a home stealing a color TV set.

71) Impulsive killing of a stranger.
72) Theft of a car for the purpose of resale.
73) Impulsive killing of a policeman.
74) Planned killing of a policeman.
75) Deserting to the enemy in time of war.
76) Father-daughter incest.
77) Knowingly using inaccurate scales in weighing meat for sale.
78) Refusal to serve when drafted in peace time.
79) Burglary of an appliance store stealing several TV sets.
80) Selling marijuana.

Biographical Information

Age: ______  Sex:  M ( )  F ( )  Race:  White ( )  Black ( )  Hispanic ( )  Native American ( )  Asian ( )  Other ( )
Education:  High School ( )  Some College ( )  College Graduate ( )  Graduate School ( )
Occupation:  ______
Appendix C
Crime Seriousness Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Event</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Planned killing of a person for a fee</td>
<td>8.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assassination of a public official</td>
<td>8.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Planned killing of a spouse</td>
<td>8.800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Planned killing of a policeman</td>
<td>8.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Killing someone after an argument over a business transaction</td>
<td>8.731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Planned killing of an acquaintance</td>
<td>8.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Impulsive killing of an acquaintance</td>
<td>8.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Deliberately starting a fire which results in a death</td>
<td>8.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Impulsive killing of a stranger</td>
<td>8.586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Impulsive killing of a policeman</td>
<td>8.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Forcible rape after breaking into a home</td>
<td>8.562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Hijacking an airplane</td>
<td>8.538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Knowingly selling contaminated food which results in a death</td>
<td>8.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Forcible rape of a neighbor</td>
<td>8.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Killing someone during a serious argument</td>
<td>8.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Kidnapping for ransom</td>
<td>8.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Impulsive killing of a spouse</td>
<td>8.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Forcible rape of a stranger in a park</td>
<td>8.329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Spying for a foreign government</td>
<td>8.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Deliberately starting a fire in an occupied building</td>
<td>8.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Beating up a child</td>
<td>8.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Assault with a gun on a stranger</td>
<td>8.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Selling secret documents to a foreign government</td>
<td>8.255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Armed robbery of a bank</td>
<td>8.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Advocating the overthrow of the government</td>
<td>8.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Making sexual advances to young children</td>
<td>8.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Manufacturing and selling drugs known to be harmful to users</td>
<td>8.205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Assault with a gun on a stranger</td>
<td>8.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Armed robbery of a supermarket</td>
<td>8.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Armed robbery of an armored truck</td>
<td>8.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Assault with a gun on a policeman</td>
<td>7.987</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criminal Event</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>32. Armed Robbery of a neighborhood druggist</td>
<td>7.964*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Assault with a gun on a spouse</td>
<td>7.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Killing someone in a bar room free-for-all</td>
<td>7.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Armed robbery of a company payroll</td>
<td>7.911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Assault with a gun in the course of a riot</td>
<td>7.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Deserting to the enemy in time of war</td>
<td>7.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Armed holdup of a taxi driver</td>
<td>7.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Killing spouse's lover after catching them together</td>
<td>7.795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Armed hijacking of a truck</td>
<td>7.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. Armed street holdup stealing $200 in cash</td>
<td>7.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. Manufacturing and selling autos known to be dangerously defective</td>
<td>7.641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. Neglecting to care for own children</td>
<td>7.590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. Forcible rape of a former spouse</td>
<td>7.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. Selling heroin</td>
<td>7.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. Causing the death of an employee by neglecting to repair machinery</td>
<td>7.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. Killing a pedestrian while exceeding the speed limit</td>
<td>7.423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. Assault with a gun on an acquaintance</td>
<td>7.392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. Mugging and stealing $200 in cash</td>
<td>7.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. Beating up a spouse</td>
<td>7.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. A public official accepting bribes in return for favors</td>
<td>7.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. Beating up a policeman</td>
<td>7.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. Practicing medicine without a license</td>
<td>7.222*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. Beating up a stranger</td>
<td>7.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. Causing auto accident death while driving when drunk</td>
<td>7.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. Armed street holdup stealing $25 in cash</td>
<td>7.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. Seduction of a minor</td>
<td>7.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. Father-daughter incest</td>
<td>7.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59. Selling LSD</td>
<td>7.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60. Mugging and stealing $25 in cash</td>
<td>7.066*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61. Blackmail</td>
<td>7.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62. Theft of a car for the purpose of resale</td>
<td>7.025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63. Breaking and entering a bank</td>
<td>7.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64. Mother-son incest</td>
<td>7.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65. Causing the death of a tenant by neglecting to repair heating plant</td>
<td>6.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66. Knowingly selling defective used cars as completely safe</td>
<td>6.936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67. Brother-sister incest</td>
<td>6.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68. Performing illegal abortions</td>
<td>6.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69. Beating up someone in a riot</td>
<td>6.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70. Burglary of an appliance store stealing several TV sets</td>
<td>6.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71. Knowingly selling stolen stocks and bonds</td>
<td>6.669*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72. Cashing stolen payroll checks</td>
<td>6.544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73. Knowingly selling worthless stocks as valuable investments</td>
<td>6.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Event</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74. Using stolen credit cards</td>
<td>6.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75. Knowingly selling stolen goods</td>
<td>6.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76. Burglary of a home stealing a color TV set</td>
<td>6.446*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77. Beating up an acquaintance</td>
<td>6.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78. Printing counterfeit $10 bills</td>
<td>6.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79. Burglary of a home stealing a portable transistor radio</td>
<td>6.293*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80. Passing worthless checks for more than $500</td>
<td>6.269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81. Shoplifting a diamond ring from a jewelry store</td>
<td>6.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82. Intimidating a witness in a court case</td>
<td>6.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83. Looting goods in a riot</td>
<td>6.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84. Burglary of a factory stealing machine tools</td>
<td>6.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85. Briberying a public official to obtain favors</td>
<td>6.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86. Leaving the scene of an accident</td>
<td>6.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87. Employee embezzling company funds</td>
<td>6.040*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88. Theft of a car for joy-riding</td>
<td>6.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89. Selling liquor to minors</td>
<td>5.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90. Selling pep pills</td>
<td>5.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91. Pouring paint over someone's car</td>
<td>5.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92. Fixing prices of machines sold to business</td>
<td>5.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93. Knowingly passing counterfeit money</td>
<td>5.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94. Passing worthless checks involving less than $100</td>
<td>5.669*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95. Refusing to obey the lawful order of a policeman</td>
<td>5.612*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96. Using heroin</td>
<td>5.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97. Impersonating a policeman</td>
<td>5.564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98. Shoplifting a dress from a department store</td>
<td>5.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99. Fixing prices of a consumer product like gasoline</td>
<td>5.449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100. Joining a riot</td>
<td>5.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101. Using LSD</td>
<td>5.423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102. Resisting arrest</td>
<td>5.423</td>
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<tr>
<td>103. Refusal to pay alimony</td>
<td>5.372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104. Willfully neglecting to file income tax returns</td>
<td>5.326*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105. Knowingly using inaccurate scales in weighing meat for sale</td>
<td>5.316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106. Selling marijuana</td>
<td>5.270*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107. Lending money at illegal interest rates</td>
<td>5.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108. Knowingly buying stolen goods</td>
<td>5.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109. Refusal to make essential repairs to rental property</td>
<td>5.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110. Driving while drunk</td>
<td>5.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111. Desertion from military service in peacetime</td>
<td>5.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112. Refusal to serve when drafted in peace time</td>
<td>4.886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113. Overcharging on repairs to automobiles</td>
<td>4.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114. Overcharging for credit in selling goods</td>
<td>4.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115. Shoplifting a pair of shoes in a shoe store</td>
<td>4.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116. Using false identification to obtain goods from a store</td>
<td>4.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117. False claims of dependents on income tax returns</td>
<td>4.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118. Shoplifting a carton of cigarettes from a supermarket</td>
<td>4.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119. Under-reporting income on income tax returns</td>
<td>4.633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Event</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
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<tr>
<td>120. Smuggling goods to avoid paying import duties</td>
<td>4.620</td>
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<tr>
<td>121. Shoplifting a book in a bookstore</td>
<td>4.593 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122. Driving while license is suspended</td>
<td>4.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123. False advertising of a headache remedy</td>
<td>4.551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124. Breaking a plate glass window in a shop</td>
<td>4.481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125. Selling pornographic magazines</td>
<td>4.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126. Proposing homosexual acts to an adult</td>
<td>3.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127. Soliciting for prostitution</td>
<td>3.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128. Killing a suspected burglar in home</td>
<td>3.921 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129. Using pep pills</td>
<td>3.785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130. Joining a prohibited demonstration</td>
<td>3.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131. Repeated running away from home</td>
<td>3.657 *</td>
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<tr>
<td>132. Engaging in male homosexual acts with consenting adults</td>
<td>3.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133. Being drunk in public places</td>
<td>3.519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134. Refusal to pay parking fines</td>
<td>3.506 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135. Repeated refusal to obey parents</td>
<td>3.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136. Engaging in female homosexual acts with consenting adults</td>
<td>3.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137. Repeated truancy</td>
<td>2.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138. Disturbing the peace</td>
<td>2.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139. Loitering in public places</td>
<td>2.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140. Refusal to answer census taker</td>
<td>1.987</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scores may range from 1.0 (least serious) to 9.0 (most serious).

* Crimes scored by all 172 respondents.

** This event was inadvertently repeated by Rossi (see items 22 and 28). The difference between the scores in the Rossi survey was .185; on this survey the difference is .095. The difference between the scores may be attributed to "response unreliability (Rossi et al., 1974:229)" between the two questionnaires.
Appendix D

Virginia Prescribed Sanctions

Class 1 Felony

1. Planned killing of a person for a fee
2. Assassination of a public official
3. Planned killing of a spouse
4. Planned killing of a policeman
5. Planned killing of an acquaintance
6. Impulsive killing of a policeman

Average seriousness score for a Class 1 Felony: 8.761

Class 2 Felony

1. Killing someone after an argument over a business transaction
2. Deliberately starting a fire which results in a death
3. Killing someone during a serious argument
4. Kidnapping for ransom
5. Deliberately starting a fire in an occupied building
6. Armed robbery of a bank
7. Neglecting to care for own children
8. Causing auto accident death while driving when drunk
9. Breaking and entering a bank

Average seriousness score for a Class 2 Felony: 8.074

Class 3 Felony

1. Impulsive killing of an acquaintance
2. Impulsive killing of a stranger
3. Forcible rape after breaking into a home
4. Knowingly selling contaminated food which results in a death
5. Forcible rape of a neighbor
6. Impulsive killing of a spouse
7. Forcible rape of a stranger in a park
8. Assault with a gun on a stranger
9. Manufacturing and selling drugs known to be harmful to users
10. Armed robbery of a supermarket
11. Armed robbery of an armored truck
12. Assault with a gun on a policeman
13. Armed robbery of a neighborhood druggist
14. Assault with a gun on a spouse
15. Killing someone in a bar room free-for-all
16. Armed robbery of a company payroll
17. Assault with a gun in the course of a riot
18. Armed holdup of a taxi driver
19. Killing spouse's lover after catching them together
20. Armed street holdup stealing $200 in cash
21. Forcible rape of a former spouse
22. Killing a pedestrian while exceeding the speed limit
23. Assault with a gun on an acquaintance
24. Mugging and stealing $200 in cash
25. Armed street holdup stealing $25 in cash
26. Mugging and stealing $25 in cash
27. Burglary of a home stealing a color TV set
28. Burglary of a home stealing a portable transistor radio
29. Killing a suspected burglar in home

Average seriousness score for a Class 3 Felony: 7.695

Class 4 Felony

1. A public official accepting bribes in return for favors
2. Performing illegal abortions
3. Burglary of an appliance store stealing several TV sets
4. Knowingly selling stolen stocks and bonds
5. Knowingly selling worthless stocks as valuable investments
6. Using stolen credit cards
7. Knowingly selling stolen goods
8. Printing counterfeit $10 bills
9. Looting goods in a riot
10. Burglary of a factory stealing machine tools
11. Bribing a public official to obtain favors
12. Employee embezzling company funds
13. Knowingly buying stolen goods

Average seriousness score for a Class 4 Felony: 6.362

Class 5 Felony

1. Selling heroin
2. Causing the death of an employee by neglecting to repair machinery
3. Father-daughter incest
4. Selling LSD
5. Blackmail
6. Mother-son incest
7. Causing the death of a tenant by neglecting to repair heating plant
8. Shoplifting a diamond ring from a jewelry store
9. Selling pep pills
10. Using heroin
11. Shoplifting a dress from a department store
12. Using LSD
13. Selling marijuana
14. Shoplifting a pair of shoes from a shoe store
15. Shoplifting a carton of cigarettes from a supermarket
16. Shoplifting a book in a bookstore
17. Using pep pills

Average seriousness score for a Class 5 Felony: 5.981

Class 6 Felony

1. Making sexual advances to young children
2. Seduction of a minor
3. Theft of a car for the purpose of resale
4. Cashing stolen payroll checks
5. Passing worthless checks for more than $500
6. Theft of a car for joy-riding
7. Proposing homosexual acts to an adult
8. Engaging in male homosexual acts with consenting adults
9. Engaging in female homosexual acts with consenting adults

Average seriousness score for a Class 6 Felony: 5.765

Class 1 Misdemeanor

1. Beating up a child
2. Beating up a spouse
3. Beating up a policeman
4. Practicing medicine without a license
5. Beating up a stranger
6. Beating up someone in a riot
7. Beating up an acquaintance
8. Intimidating a witness in a court case
9. Selling liquor to minors
10. Pouring paint over someone's car
11. Passing worthless checks for less than $100
12. Impersonating a policeman
13. Joining a riot
14. Resisting arrest
15. Refusal to pay alimony
16. Lending money at illegal interest rates
17. Refusal to make essential repairs to rental property
18. Driving while drunk
19. Breaking a plate glass window in a shop
20. Selling pornographic magazines
21. Soliciting for prostitution
22. Joining a prohibited demonstration

Average seriousness score for a Class 1 Misdemeanor: 5.792
Class 2 Misdemeanor

1. Refusal to obey lawful order of a policeman
2. Refusal to pay parking fines

Average seriousness score for a Class 2 Misdemeanor: 4.559

Class 3 Misdemeanor

There are no Class 3 Misdemeanors in this survey

Class 4 Misdemeanor

1. Brother-sister incest
2. Using false identification to obtain goods from a store
3. Being drunk in public places
4. Disturbing the peace
5. Loitering in public places

Average seriousness score for a Class 4 Misdemeanor: 4.048

Events not violating Virginia Criminal Law *

1. Hijacking an airplane
2. Spying for a foreign government
3. Advocating overthrow of the government
4. Selling secret documents to a foreign government
5. Deserting to the enemy in time of war
6. Armed hijacking of a truck
7. Manufacturing and selling autos known to be dangerously defective
8. Knowingly selling defective used cars as completely safe
9. Fixing prices of machines sold to business
10. Fixing prices of a consumer product like gasoline
11. Willfully neglecting to file income tax returns
12. Knowingly using inaccurate scales in weighing meat for sale
13. Desertion from military service in peace time
14. Refusal to serve when drafted in peace time
15. Overcharging on repairs to automobiles
16. Overcharging for credit in selling goods
17. False claims of dependents on income tax returns
18. Under-reporting income on income tax returns
19. Smuggling goods to avoid paying import duties
20. False advertising of a headache remedy
21. Repeated running away from home
22. Repeated refusal to obey parents
23. Repeated truancy
24. Refusal to answer census taker
Non-classed offenses **

1. Leaving the scene of an accident (penalty varies with dollar amount of damage)
2. Knowingly passing counterfeit money (a class 6 felony normally; class 3 if more than ten bills are passed)
3. Driving while license is suspended (a possible jail sentence of ten days to six months with a possible fine of up to $500)

Note: Crimes are listed within their respective classes according to their position on the seriousness scale derived through this research. Within each category, the lower the number of the offense the higher the seriousness score.

Source: Virginia Code of Laws.

* The following offenses have been removed from the correlational analyses. Many of these events are federal crimes for which Virginia has no required sanctions. Others are violations of civil rather than criminal law. In either case, the sanctions cannot be included in my correlations due to their different statuses; therefore they were removed.

** The offenses do not clearly fit in any Class of crime.
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